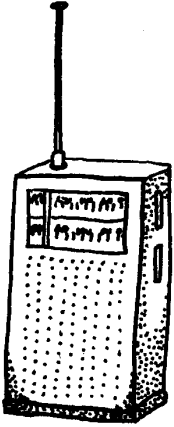


BANANAS HANDOUT

How To Write a Disaster Plan For Family Child Care



You are required to have a disaster plan to obtain a family child care license. This plan spells out what steps to take and what steps to teach the children to take in case of an emergency like a fire or earthquake. You need to write up your plan, teach it to the children and periodically practice it with them. No one else can write a disaster plan for you since each home is designed differently and the layout of your home plays an important role in designing your plan. This Handout seeks to help you write a plan that will

work for you and the children in your care. Feel free to include additional items.

Any Emergency:

1. Do your children know how to call the fire department and emergency rescue should something happen to you? You can easily teach children over three years of age how to call 911. (Let children use a toy phone to practice calling 911 – not a real one!) Younger children can learn how to call the operator. If children are too young to know your address, teach them to stay on the phone or leave it off the hook so the call can be traced. Teaching children how to make these calls can be part of your disaster plan.
2. Do you have emergency cards for every child in care? Licensing regulations require these cards to contain: the child's full name, birthdate, the name, phone number and location of the parent/s or responsible adult to contact in an emergency, the name and phone number of the child's physician and the parent's authorization for you to seek emergency care if you can't reach the parent. It is a good idea to record on this card if the child has any food or drug allergies or special physical conditions, even though this information is not required. Also include the names of family members or friends to contact if the person/s authorized to pick up the child can't be reached. Contact BANANAS for a sample emergency card.
3. Do you have an adult nearby who could watch the children in your absence due to an emergency? Identify that person and how quickly s/he could come to your home. (Many providers make special arrangements with a neighbor.) This person should have a criminal record clearance on file with Community Care Licensing.
4. Do you have a battery-operated radio and flashlight on hand in case the electricity goes out? Mention them in your plan. (Note: the local emergency radio stations are KCBS 740 AM, KGO 810 AM and KNBR 680 AM.)
5. Do you have a first aid kit? Are your CPR and First Aid certificates current? Licensed providers must complete a 15-hour Health and Safety Training course. After first taking the course, you must periodically recertify in CPR and First Aid.

Fire Safety Plans:

1. What is your fire drill signal? Is it a bell? A shrill whistle? etc.
2. What exits should the children use? You should have a minimum of two separate exits and practice using both since a fire can block one exit. Also plan and practice how to leave from different parts of your house.
3. What are your plans for evacuating infants in your care? If more than one infant needs to be transported, you can wrap up each infant in a separate crib sheet. Some programs have specially designed aprons with "pouches" for carrying babies. Programs with ramps can use sturdy cribs with wheels.
4. When should you dial 911 – before or after getting the children out? Your first responsibility is to get all children away from any danger. However, call 911 if possible. You can leave the phone off the hook and yell "fire!" since most fire departments can identify the caller's phone number and address as long as the call is not coming from a cell phone.

5. Where will you take the children after they have left your house? A neighbor's house or lawn? A nearby church or school grounds? You should decide on two alternative locations (one nearby, one farther away) and put them in your plan. Also inform the children's parents of these relocation sites.
6. What is the first thing you should do once you arrive at your relocation site? **Account for everyone.**

Once you have established a fire drill routine, practice it at least once a month and be sure that any new children in care learn the rules.

Other Fire Safety Rules to Teach Children: (Besides never to play with matches!)

1. Do your children know what a hot door means? A fire may be burning on the other side and the door should not be opened. If no other door exits from the room, children should know how to climb out a window or at least how to open one and call for help. Tell children never to hide during a fire or other emergency (a common occurrence with young children).
2. Do your children know what to do if caught in smoke? Crawl out holding your breath as much as possible. Keep as close to the floor as possible. (Smoke rises.)
3. Should anyone ever return to a burning building to retrieve a treasured item? The answer is a big NO.
4. Do your children know what to do if their clothes catch fire? They should STOP, DROP to the ground and ROLL. BANANAS has a small poster illustrating this safety technique – copies are available by mail, at our office or from our website.
5. What fire safety devices do you have in your home?
 - Do you have **smoke detectors** in sleeping areas and the kitchen? Check the batteries monthly and change them annually on a date you'll remember (for instance in October, when daylight savings time ends). Battery-operated detectors are best since a fire can disable your electrical system.
 - Do you have a **fire extinguisher** that works on all kinds of fires? Extinguishers should also be checked yearly. Make sure the arrow on the gauge is pointing to the green area.
 - How about a **rope ladder** or other means of exit from a second story (if you have one)? List in your plan what devices you have and where they are located. Remember that you are required to have a smoke detector and a fire extinguisher!

(Thanks to Dory Ehrlich of the Berkeley Fire Department for her help with this Handout.)

Earthquake Safety Plans:

(For more information on safety plans, please consult our BANANAS handout, "Earthquake Safety Rules for Parents and Child Care Providers," available on-line, at our office or by mail.)

1. What signal would you use to let children know that an earthquake drill or an actual earthquake was happening? It should be distinctly different from the one used for a fire drill.
2. What should children do when they hear the signal? Here are some standard rules to teach children:
 - DUCK, COVER and HOLD. (Drop under a sturdy desk or table, hold on and protect your eyes by pressing your face against an arm.)
 - If there's no table or desk nearby, sit on the floor against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could topple. COVER your head with your arms. HOLD that position until the caregiver says to stop.
 - Stay away from windows, outside doors, glass, chimneys, fireplaces and anything that could topple.
 - If outside, stay away from overhead electric wires, trees, poles or cornices of tall buildings.

Use these rules to decide which places in your home are safest for the children. Which walls or doorways are inside ones? Which tables or desks are away from glass, outside walls, etc. and can be safely used for cover? You can identify them for the children using stickers or decals. You will have to figure out safe places in every room which the children normally occupy – you never know when an earthquake will strike. You should also design and practice an "outside" earthquake safety plan. Include your earthquake safety drill procedures in your disaster plan.

3. What should you do once the shaking has stopped?
 - You should know how to turn off the main gas valve (if you smell gas), the main water valve, and the electrical current coming into your house.
 - If you smell gas, have broken water pipes or short circuits in your electrical wiring, take the children outside. Keep the proper tools close at hand so you can turn off the utilities. Include the locations of these turnoff points and your tools in your disaster plan.

Chemical Spills, Floods, Explosions, Other Disasters:

Be prepared to follow whatever local authorities order. If instructed to "shelter in place," stay indoors, close windows and doors and turn off air conditioning systems. Do not leave your sheltered location until instructed to do so. Keep children's emergency cards within easy reach so you can take them with you in an evacuation. Establish an out-of-area contact person who can take messages from you and relay them to parents. Post a notice on or near your front door telling parents where you and the children will be. Explain these procedures in your disaster plan.